



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE STATE HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

DIRECTOR'S REVIEW PROGRAM

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February 13, 2013

TO: Teresa Parsons, SPHR
Director's Review Program Supervisor

FROM: Kris Brophy, SPHR
Director's Review Program Investigator

SUBJECT: Catherine Courtright v. Washington State University (WSU)
Allocation Review Request ALLO-12-038

Ms. Courtright's position was reallocated effective April 1, 2012, following a management-initiated position review based upon an updated Position Description Summary received by the WSU Human Resource Services office. As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, including the exhibits presented during the Director's review conference and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of Ms. Courtright's assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude her position is properly allocated to the Research Study Coordinator 1 classification.

Background

WSU Human Resources (WSU-HR) conducted a position review of Ms. Courtright's position following submittal of a management-initiated reclassification request. In its submitted online Position Description form (Exhibit B-2), the WSU College of Nursing management staff requested that Ms. Courtright's position be reallocated from the Research Study Assistant classification to the Research Study Coordinator 1 classification. By memorandum dated May 16, 2011, WSU-HR notified Ms. Courtright that her position was being reallocated to the Research Study Coordinator 1 classification, effective April 1, 2012 (Exhibit A-2).

On June 12, 2012, the Office of the State Human Resources Director received Ms. Courtright's letter appealing WSU's reallocation determination (Exhibit A-1).

On January 10, 2013, I conducted a Director's review telephone conference. Present during the conference were Ms. Catherine Courtright; Ms. Jennifer Klein, WSU Human Resources Consultant, and Ms. Kim Maupin, Senior Human Resources Consultant.

Rationale for Director's Determination

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

Duties and Responsibilities

Ms. Courtright works for the Washington State University College of Nursing. Her position is located at the National Children's Study (NCS), Grant County Field Office in Moses Lake Washington. Her position provides research study coordination and administrative support to the federally funded Grant County NCS Pilot Study research project. Ms. Courtright reports to Dr. Phillip Butterfield, Associate Professor at WSU College of Nursing in Spokane. Dr. Butterfield serves as the principal investigator for the project for the Grant County Field Office location.

The NCS is an established national study. During the review telephone conference Ms. Courtright explained that the NCS started with seven research sites in 2009. However, those sites did not meet enrollment and retention requirements. A Pilot Study was subsequently implemented and she works at one of the thirty pilot study sites. In her comments, Ms. Courtright states that the goal of the pilot phase of the National Children's Study is to create and design the logistics of carrying out the 21 year longitudinal research study which includes developing the appropriate methodologies for retaining participants over the course of the study. She stated that the NCS and the Pilot Study are running concurrently.

The updated position description describing Ms. Courtright's duties and responsibilities indicates that the purpose of her position is to coordinate the daily operations involving the collection of environmental, social and behavioral data from women and their children who have enrolled to participate in the Grant County NCS Pilot Study. Her duties include coordinating, scheduling, monitoring, and performing research activities associated with the NCS participants. This includes performing a variety of support activities including reviewing and interpreting participant interview and communication protocols, scheduling and monitoring the status of participant contacts and interviews, and using computer-based tools to input participant research information and monitor research activities. Ms. Courtright also summarizes work performed, analyzes participant data and prepares reports to monitor progress and help higher level staff manage the project.

Ms. Courtright's duties and responsibilities are summarized from the updated position description form as follows:

- 35% Data Collection Interpret and apply established field study protocols and interviewing procedures. Explain study related testing and sample collection to participants. Interview participants and their children using Computer-Assisted-Personal-Interview (CAPI) questionnaires on tablet computers. Record responses using approved data collection tools. Administer test batteries. Perform quality assurance and control checks on data collection instruments. Review all instruments to find errors. Administer CAPI questionnaires to participants who have moved. Review data samples to assure accuracy and adhere to protocols. Report deviations in protocol or errors in data to investigators and research study manager. Provide input to investigators and research study manager regarding how to improve data collection tools and protocols.
- 25% Case Management Use computer based tools and manage individual participant cases with respect to data collection, incentive gifts, contacts with participants for scheduling visits and activities associated with participant retention that include tasks such as mailing letters and cards to participants or sending other approved correspondence to participants. Assist in the development of new tools as needed. Review case management notes, scheduled appointments and scheduled contacts

on a regular basis to assure quality control for all participant related activities and data collection events.

- 20% Retention Activities Develop and/or provide input to specific protocols for locating participants who no longer have valid phone numbers, addresses or who have moved. Implement those protocols and actions necessary to locate and re-establish contact with lost participants. Assist in identifying specific events and activities designed to communicate with and provide general outreach to participants and community members. Assist the outreach coordinator and research study manager in organizing and implementing outreach events. Make contact and present information to community partners and leaders as part of the outreach and retention activities for the NCS in Grant County. Use case management tools and established protocols to continue to build relationships. Participate in outreach events for participants and the community. Record outreach activities in the forms and logs.
- 10% Data Reporting Analyze data regarding participants. Summarize the data and prepare weekly reports or other regularly scheduled reports. Present results of data reports at weekly meetings, or other meetings as requested.
- 5% Training/Meetings/Preparation Prepare or assist in the preparation of documents such as letters, call scripts and protocols for (Institutional Review Board) IRB submission. Assist in the IRB review and approval process, working closely with the UW IRB representative. Attend and participate in regular meetings with College of Nursing NCS staff, Grant County field office staff and Pacific Northwest Center for the NCS staff at the University of Washington.

Summary of WSU's reasoning

In exhibit B-1, Ms. Klein asserts that Ms. Courtright's position does not meet the requirements of the definition of the RSC 3 class of providing professional-level research study support. She contends Ms. Courtright's work does not rise to the professional level, as the scope of her duties does not require the application of advanced knowledge, nor are her duties original and creative in nature. Ms. Klein contends the NCS is a national study which follows strict study requirements and research protocols. Ms. Klein contends this limits the scope of Ms. Courtright's duties to include focusing primarily on coordinating the operational aspects of the study for the Grant County field office. She states that the College of Nursing indicated that Ms. Courtright does not have responsibility to assist in the design of the study, determine appropriate experimental controls, develop and verify investigative procedures, analyze research study results and prepare reports for publication, or develop the data quality control program.

Ms. Klein asserts that the principal investigators and research study manager for the study retain overall authority over program operations, the development and verification of investigative procedures and experimental design modifications, decision-making authority and discretion to decide which work methods to use, and the tasks to perform and procedures to follow to meet the project's work objectives.

In total, Ms. Klein asserts that Ms. Courtright's position is properly reallocated to the Research Study Coordinator 1 class.

Summary of Ms. Courtright's Perspective

Ms. Courtright acknowledges the WSU College of Nursing management staff officially submitted an updated position description form requesting that her position be reallocated to the Research Study Coordinator 1 class. (see exhibit B-2). However, Ms. Courtright asserts that Dr. Butterfield had previously requested that her position be reallocated to the Research Study Coordinator 2 class when he submitted the updated position description form to WSU-HR (see exhibit A-5).

During the review telephone conference, Ms. Courtright acknowledged that the NCS is a national study that follows strict study requirements which includes set protocols and investigative procedures that must be followed. She acknowledged that given the nature of the study, she does not perform direct experimental research design and other related tasks.

However, Ms. Courtright states in her comments that the goal of the pilot phase of the National Children's Study is to design and develop the logistics of carrying out the 21 year longitudinal research study. Ms. Courtright states in her comments that the case management procedures used in Grant County to implement the set protocols and procedures have been developed, tested, and implemented locally. Ms. Courtright states this included developing procedures on how to monitor, manage, and track individual cases. Ms. Courtright states that the results of these efforts have been reported at the national level. Ms. Courtright contends her position provides professional level work assisting in the design and development of the appropriate case management methodologies and other logistical protocols to retain participants over the course of the study. She asserts the scope of these duties reach the Research Study Coordinator 2 level and her position should be reallocated to that class.

Class Specifications

When comparing the assignment of work and level of responsibility to the available class specifications, the class series concept (if one exists) followed by definition and distinguishing characteristics are primary considerations.

When determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. See *Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries*, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Comparison of Duties to Research Study Coordinator 2

The Definition for this class states:

Provide professional-level support for clinical, biomedical and/or behavioral science research studies involving human subjects; develop and verify investigative procedures and assist in experimental design.

The Distinguishing Characteristics for this class states:

Under general direction, perform professional level support for research studies involving human subjects. Assist in the design of studies; determine appropriate experimental controls; develop and verify investigative procedures to accomplish

research goals; analyze research study results and prepare reports for publication; develop data quality control program.

Ms. Courtright's position does not meet the primary requirement of the definition of the RSC 3 class of providing professional-level support for clinical or other research studies involving human subjects.

As stated in the Distinguishing Characteristics, this class describes positions which provide a broad range of professional-level support to research studies including assisting in experimental research design, determining appropriate experimental controls, developing data quality control programs, verifying investigative procedures, analyzing research study results, and preparing final reports for publication. While a portion of Ms. Courtright's duties reach certain aspects of this class, the primary focus of her position, and the majority of her duties as a whole, do not meet this intent.

The NCS is a national study with specific research requirements and set protocols which include specific investigative procedures to be followed. Ms. Courtright acknowledged during the review telephone conference that her duties do not include performing direct experimental design for the NCS. Additionally, the scope of her duties with respect to the NCS do not include determining experimental controls, developing and verifying investigative procedures, developing quality control programs, or analyzing results and preparing final reports for publication. These tasks are developed and managed at a higher level. During the review telephone conference Ms. Klein indicated that the study itself is rigid and follow-up activities are very tightly controlled at the national level and although demographic information is locally managed, the actual study results are maintained at the national level. In total, this limits the overall level and range of research support Ms. Courtright provides to the National Children's Study.

Further, although the typical work examples do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. The scope of Ms. Courtright's position does not include performing tasks described at this level such as assisting in developing research proposals, reviewing and determining research methods, and establishing guidelines for identifying subject populations. Her position does not require her to extract information from institution or clinical records. Her duties do not include evaluating the effectiveness of data collection, implementing research protocols and monitoring participants' adherence to study protocols. She does not take direct action to correct deviations from protocol requirements. Her position does not have responsibility to verify the accuracy of research data; participate in the development of procedures for the design of measurement instruments and scoring systems.

Ms. Courtright's position does assist in the development of the appropriate case management methodologies and logistics related to participants of the Grant County NCS pilot study. A portion this work does reach to aspects of the Research Study Coordinator 2 class.

For example, Ms. Courtright states that the case management procedures used in Grant County have been developed, tested, and implemented locally. As a test site for the NCS Pilot study, a portion of Ms. Courtright's work involves assisting in developing the logistics needed to locally manage and conduct the NCS 21-year longitudinal pilot study.

Ms. Courtright works directly with Dr. Butterfield, and regionally with the NCS Research Study Manager, Mary Ann Barnard at the Pacific Northwest Center (PNWC) located at the University of Washington, to assist in developing the operating processes and procedures regarding participant scheduling and data collection. Ms. Courtright states this included field testing study

instruments and providing input regarding research questions that needed clarification, developing letters (which needed Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval) to send to participants to schedule appointments, and developing a checklist to track scheduling activities.

Additionally, Ms. Courtright provides assistance in designing and developing case management tools and other logistics in order to retain participants over the course of the study. This includes developing procedures on how to monitor, manage, and track individual cases. She developed spreadsheets and her suggestions assisted in developing the core of the tracking system used to locally maintain participant cases. She also worked with the PNWC to develop the standard operating procedure for participants who move out of the area.

She also assists in organizing and implementing outreach events. She makes contact and presents information to community partners and leaders as part of the outreach and retention activities for the NCS in Grant County. The scope of these duties each to aspects of the typical work statements of this class which state:

Assist in modification of procedures for collecting ... data;

Establish and maintain contact with community agencies, health care providers, and/or study sponsors; inform sponsors of current status of research...

However, while a portion of her work reaches aspects of this class, the primary focus of Ms. Courtright's position, and the majority of her duties as a whole do not include performing the breadth of professional level support as required. The primary focus of Ms. Courtright's position is to coordinate the operational aspects of the NCS Pilot study for the Grant County field office. Additionally, the thrust of the case management activities she performs are focused on coordinating the administrative and operational functions related to data collection and retention activities for the pilot study. This includes such activities as maintaining home addresses and other contact information, following standard procedures for follow-up messages, and developing activities to keep participants retained over the course of the pilot study. The scope of these duties does not encompass the full range of professional level support required by this class. Therefore, because the majority of Ms. Courtright's duties do not involve performing professional-level support, her position should not be reallocated to the RSC 2 level class.

Comparison of Duties to Research Study Coordinator 1

The Definition for the Research Study Coordinator 1 class states:

Coordinate the operations of clinical, biomedical and/or behavioral research studies involving human subjects.

The Distinguishing Characteristics for this class states:

Under general supervision, coordinate the operations of research studies involving human subjects and requiring the application of knowledge and skills specific to the study. Coordinate, schedule and monitor research activities and subject participation. Interpret and apply protocol; conduct interviews, administer tests and record observations; coordinate the management of study data; monitor data to maintain quality control; summarize study results and prepare reports.

The primary thrust of Ms. Courtright's position, and the majority of her duties as a whole, closely falls within the scope and level of responsibility stated by the Definition and Distinguishing Characteristics of this class.

The primary purpose of Ms. Courtright's position is to coordinate the operations of the NCS Pilot study for the Grant County field office. Ms. Courtright performs the duties stated in the distinguishing characteristics including coordinating, scheduling and monitoring research data collection activities and subject participation. She interprets and applies protocols; conducts interviews, coordinates the case management information of study data; monitors data to maintain quality control, and prepares summary information and reports for higher level investigators and the research study manager.

Although the Typical Work examples do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. The following provides an example of the level of work assigned to the Research Study Coordinator 1 class, as stated on the class specification:

Recruit, interview and screen potential subjects and determine eligibility according to established criteria;

Assist in establishing and maintaining contact with community agencies, health care providers and/or study sponsors; inform sponsors of current status; refer participants to community service agencies as appropriate;

Maintain adherence to research protocols and verify accuracy of research study data;

Interpret and record subject behaviors using observation codes, rating scales, questionnaires or standardized assessments;

Collect data in a variety of settings such as institutions, clinical settings and/or subjects' homes;

Record behavior of participants using sound and video-tape equipment; transcribe and summarize data recorded from audio and video-taped meetings;

Assist in modification of procedures for collecting and summarizing data;

Use statistical and database management programs to analyze data and prepare summary narrative reports, graphs, tables, charts and illustrations;

Assist in developing a computerized system for tracking study participants; monitor data quality control to ensure adherence to study protocol;

Assist in the preparation of human subjects applications, consent forms and progress reports for institutional review board;

May administer psychological/neuropsychological or other test batteries;

May direct the work of assigned staff;

Ms. Courtright duties are fully consistent with these statements. Ms. Courtright tracks participant information and prepares weekly participant reports as well as reports on any specialized activity such as participant retention or relocation issues. The specialized reports are then shared by the PNWC with other study sites and become part of the basis for the development of

the Pilot study. She also does quality control to ensure adherence to study protocol. Her duties include using statistical and database management tools to record and track participant data and contact information. She prepares summary narrative reports.

Based on the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to his position, effective April 1, 2012, the Research Study Coordinator 1 classification best describes Ms. Courtright's position.

When determining the appropriate classification for a specific position, the duties and responsibilities of that position must be considered in their entirety and the position must be allocated to the classification that provides the best fit overall for the majority of the position's duties and responsibilities. Dudley v. Dept. of Labor and Industries, PRB Case No. R-ALLO-07-007 (2007).

Further, positions are to be allocated to the class which best describes the majority of the work assignment. Ramos v DOP, PAB Case No. A85-18 (1985).

A position's allocation is not a reflection of performance or an individual's ability to perform higher-level work. Rather, it is based on the majority of work assigned to a position and how that work best aligns with the available job classifications. Based on the level and scope of the overall duties and responsibilities assigned to Ms. Courtright's position, the Research Study Coordinator 1 classification is the best fit.

Appeal Rights

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to the Washington personnel resources board .Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The mailing address for the Personnel Resources Board (PRB) is P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911. The PRB Office is located on the 4th floor of the Insurance Building, 302 Sid Snyder Avenue SW, Olympia, Washington. The main telephone number is (360) 902-9820, and the fax number is (360) 586-4694.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Cathy Courtright, WSU
Jennifer Klein, WSU
Lisa Skriletz, OSHRD

Enclosure: List of Exhibits

CATHY COURTRIGHT v WSU

ALLO-11-038

List of Exhibits

A. Cathy Courtright Exhibits

1. Letter of request to Director's Review Program received June 12, 2012 (3 pages)
2. May 16, 2012 allocation determination notification memo (1 page)
3. August 1, 2012 response to WSU's July 18, 2012 argument for allocation
4. Copy of exhibit A1
5. Position Description form prepared by Ms. Courtright, no signatures (12 pages)

B. WSU Exhibits

1. July 18, 2012 letter from Jennifer Klein with analysis for allocation (4 pages)
2. Position Description for Cathy Courtright's position, electronic (17 pages)

C. Class Specifications

1. Class Specification for Research Study Coordinator 1
2. Class Specification for Research Study Coordinator 2